

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of the claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of screening a caller prior to establishing a telephone connection between the caller and a callee, the method comprising:

receiving a telephone call from the caller;

prompting the caller to speak the name of the callee;

receiving the name of the callee when spoken by the caller, wherein the callee is a person;

and

identifying the caller by analyzing the voice of the caller received when the caller speaks the name of the callee, ~~wherein the identifying comprises the steps of:~~

generating a first voice sample of the caller's voice when the caller speaks the name of the callee; and

comparing the first voice sample to a second voice sample.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining whether the caller is authorized to be directly connected to the callee; and
routing the telephone call to a telephone terminal for the callee if the caller is authorized to be directly connected to the callee.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising routing the telephone call to a message recording system if the caller is unauthorized to be directly connected to the callee.

4. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising disconnecting the telephone call if the caller is unauthorized to be directly connected to the callee.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein prompting the caller to speak the name of the callee is done using a synthesized voice.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the name of the callee includes receiving electrical audio signals representing the name of the callee as spoken by the caller.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising creating a database containing multiple sets of digital voice samples, wherein each set within the multiple sets contains at least one digital voice sample for a different one of a plurality of callers.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein identifying the caller includes:
creating a test set of voice samples from the voice of the caller received when the caller speaks the name of the callee; and
individually comparing the test set of voice samples with the each set of voice samples in the database to identify whether the caller is one of the plurality of callers.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising routing the telephone call to a message recording system if the callee is unable to receive the telephone call.

11-12. (Canceled)

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising creating a database containing a plurality of digital text files, wherein each of the plurality of digital text files contains identification information for a different one of a plurality of callees.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the each of the plurality of digital text files is in ASCII format, and wherein the identification information includes the name of the callee.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the identification information further includes a telephone extension number for the callee.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein identifying the caller includes:

converting the name of the callee as spoken by the caller into a test digital text file; and
individually comparing the test digital text file with the each of the plurality of digital text files in the database to identify the callee.

17-26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
identifying the callee by analyzing the voice of the caller received when the caller speaks the name of the callee; and
routing the telephone call to the callee so identified.
